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# Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali

## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2085 (2012) of 20 December 2012, in which the Council requested that I report on the implementation of the resolution. The report summarizes major political and security developments in Mali since the adoption of the resolution and outlines the multidimensional response of the United Nations to the crisis, while making recommendations on the way forward. The report also responds to the request of the Council as conveyed in a letter from the President of the Council to the Secretary-General dated 27 February 2013 (S/2013/129), to include in the report recommendations for the Council's consideration on options for establishing a United Nations peacekeeping operation, with regard to the letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the Council, dated 25 February, by which a letter from the interim President of Mali, Dioncounda Traoré, was transmitted to the Council (S/2013/113), in which the interim President envisages the transformation of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) into a United Nations stabilization and peacekeeping operation.

## II. Update on political and security developments

2. The political and security situation in Mali evolved significantly over the reporting period as a result of the French and African military operations alongside the Malian army in northern areas and the adoption of a transition road map by the national authorities.

3. The security situation underwent a serious deterioration in early January. On 5 January, elements of Ansar Dine and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, with the support of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, advanced southwards. On 8 January, they clashed with the Malian army north of the town of Konna, some 680 kilometres from Bamako, forcing the soldiers to withdraw the next day. At the time, Konna was the last Government-controlled town north of the key city of Mopti and the Malian defence and security forces base in Sévaré. Terrorist and other armed elements also advanced in the west, taking control of the town of Diabaly on 14 January.

4. The capture of Konna by extremist groups led the Malian transitional authorities to request the assistance of France to defend Mali's sovereignty and



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restore its territorial integrity. In response, military operations against terrorist and associated elements were initiated on 11 January under "Operation Serval", led by France, in support of the Malian defence and security forces. The deployment of African forces under the banner of AFISMA was accelerated following the military intervention, allowing some of the contingents to move into different parts of northern Mali in February.

5. Since the deployment of French and African forces in Mali, the leaders of the military coup of March 2012 have adopted a low profile. However, divisions within the army persist, as illustrated by an incident that occurred in central Bamako on 8 February, during which elements of the former Presidential Guard exchanged fire with Government troops.

6. By the end of January, State control had been restored in most major northern towns, such as Diabaly, Douentza, Gao, Konna and Timbuktu. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad announced that it had taken control of Kidal on 28 January and declared its opposition to the redeployment of the Malian defence and security forces there, allegedly out of concern over possible reprisals against the civilian population.

7. Most terrorist and associated forces withdrew northwards into the Adrar des Ifoghas mountains while others, mainly local Malians, reportedly blended into local communities. The groups have reportedly stockpiled weapons, vehicles, fuel and other supplies in remote northern areas. These armed groups have carried out counter-attacks in Gao and have resorted to asymmetric tactics, including the use of suicide bombings, which have targeted French and Malian units, as well as elements of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad.

8. The most significant development in the political process during the reporting period was the adoption of a road map for the transition, which was unanimously approved by Parliament on 29 January. The road map highlights two essential missions for the transitional Government: the restoration of territorial integrity and the organization of free and fair elections. The road map provides for further military operations alongside Operation Serval and AFISMA, aimed at recovering the areas occupied by armed groups and restoring the country's territorial integrity; the full re-establishment of State authority in the north; the reform of the armed forces; dialogue with groups who renounce military struggle and adhere to the unitary nature of the Malian State and its Constitution; the return of refugees and displaced persons; inter-communal dialogue; and the fight against impunity.

9. The road map also outlines commitments in three areas related to the organization of elections, namely: reforming the legal and institutional framework; finalizing the revision of the voters' list; and setting an electoral calendar, which schedules legislative and presidential elections before the end of July 2013. According to the road map, the President, the Prime Minister and members of the Government are not eligible to stand in the forthcoming presidential and legislative elections.

10. The Government has presented its conditions to engage in a dialogue with armed and rebel groups in northern Mali, which include respect for the country's territorial integrity and secularism. The interim President called for vigilance as to who should be the interlocutors in such a dialogue, which in his view should be open to groups that are truly representative of the populations in the north, and not

necessarily involved in rebellious activities. Since the beginning of the military operations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), through its mediation process, has maintained its willingness to support negotiations and dialogue. The Government also announced the establishment of the National Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation, provided for in the road map, adding that the Commission would be composed of representatives from all regions and communities in Mali.

11. Efforts have also intensified to establish coordination mechanisms, including the Mali Integrated Task Force, comprising representatives of the African Union, United Nations and ECOWAS, to facilitate cooperation in addressing political, security, human rights and humanitarian concerns.

## III. Humanitarian situation

12. The humanitarian situation remains critical, with millions of people affected by the crises. More than 4.3 million Malians were in need of assistance in 2012 because of the food and nutrition crisis. Despite good harvests in late 2012, approximately 747,000 people were in need of immediate food assistance and an additional 1.3 million were at risk of food insecurity. As access to commodities has been dramatically curtailed in northern Mali, humanitarian partners are scaling up to meet protection needs, such as prevention and support to victims of sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation, as well as assistance to children who had been recruited into armed groups.

13. Since April 2012, more than 470,000 persons have fled and sought refuge either in Malian host communities or in neighbouring countries, of whom 65,000 were displaced since January 2013; this figure includes 292,648 internally displaced persons and 177,637 refugees in Mauritania, the Niger and Burkina Faso. There were reports of internally displaced persons returning to urban areas in the north, but large numbers of refugees who belong to northern ethnic groups, mainly Tuaregs, were reportedly waiting for safer conditions to return. Meanwhile, urgent needs remain in the south and centre of the country, where some 60 per cent of internally displaced persons are living.

14. Humanitarian access has somewhat improved in parts of the country, but the situation remains highly volatile, particularly in the Gao and Kidal regions. Humanitarian actors have raised increasing concerns about the possible deployment of a United Nations force in Mali and the need to retain a strict distinction between the humanitarian and political/security agendas so as to avoid jeopardizing the safety of aid workers, restricting the provision of humanitarian access to all those in need and compromising the impartiality of humanitarian action.

15. As of 22 March, the Consolidated Appeals Process for Mali in 2013 had received only $73.7 million. This represents a mere 20 per cent of its total requirement, which amounts to $386 million. Without adequate resources, humanitarian partners will not have the tools they require to meet the country's most pressing needs.

## IV. Human rights situation

16. The human rights situation in Mali remains a major cause for concern, with reports of serious human rights violations in northern Mali, including summary executions, illegal arrests and forced disappearances, the use of children by armed groups, rape, forced marriages, destruction and looting of property. Since January 2013, there have also been reports of human rights violations by elements of the Malian security forces against the Tuareg and Arab communities as well as other groups that are perceived to have either been associated with rebel groups or cooperated with them. New patterns of human rights violations, including retaliatory attacks based on ethnicity, have emerged in the aftermath of the recovery of certain parts of northern Mali.

17. The Government has acknowledged the seriousness of the situation and its potential impact on Mali's stability and has promised to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of abuses. However, it lacks the required capacity to promptly address the situation. Many interlocutors identified the need to fight impunity and hold all perpetrators of serious human rights violations accountable, irrespective of affiliation and status, as a key issue that needed to be addressed in order to ensure lasting peace and stability.

18. Information was received by the United Nations concerning grave violations against children committed by parties in the north, including incidents of recruitment and use of children by armed forces, sexual violence against girls, forced marriages, abductions and attacks on schools and hospitals. Hundreds of children have been recruited by all of the armed groups active in the north, including Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar Dine, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad. The capture and detention of children for intelligence purposes is also an emerging trend that needs to be addressed as a matter of the utmost urgency.

19. The political and security crisis negatively affected the media environment in Mali. In the north, media organizations were subjected to censorship and assaults by extremist groups. Attacks against Malian journalists have also been reported in Bamako and in northern towns.

20. On 16 January, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court announced that she was formally opening an investigation following the Government's referral, in 2012, of the situation in Mali.

21. Following the destruction of 11 mausoleums in Timbuktu and one mausoleum in Gao, and the burning of some 3,000 ancient manuscripts, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has adopted an Action Plan for the Rehabilitation of Cultural Heritage and the Safeguarding of Ancient Manuscripts in Mali. The Director-General of UNESCO visited Timbuktu on 2 February.

## V. Development

22. The crisis has affected economic production and basic public services throughout the country. The suspension of official development assistance, with the

exception of humanitarian aid, and the abandonment of many investment projects has had a serious impact on the income and employment of thousands of people.

23. Key socioeconomic indicators and the living conditions of the population continue to deteriorate, while Mali's health and development indicators rank among the worst in the world. Urban populations are most affected as a result of job losses and the need to sustain large displaced populations in the cities. At least 77 per cent of Malians live under the international poverty line, most of them lacking access to safe drinking water and sanitation services of any kind. Medical facilities in Mali are very limited, and medicine is in short supply. Mali's population also suffers from a high rate of malnutrition, as well as high rates of child death, and high risks of infant and maternal death.

24. The GDP growth rate for 2012 has been estimated at a recession level of -1.5 per cent, with the possibility of a recovery in 2013 as a result of the possible release of budget support from several bilateral partners. The resumption of aid is of paramount importance for Mali's macroeconomic prospects in 2013. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the disbursement of an amount equivalent to $18.4 million for Mali under the Rapid Credit Facility, in January, so as to support the authorities with policy advice and financial support to maintain macroeconomic stability and growth during the next 12 months.

25. In this context, the United Nations continued to work to coordinate and mobilize development partners to reengage with the transitional authorities in order to limit the impact of the crisis and improve access to basic social services. A national economic and social stabilization fund, managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has also been established, aimed at supporting the Government's budget, particularly in the socioeconomic sectors and in the area of food security.

# VI. Implementation of Security Council resolution 2085 (2012)

## A. Establishment of the United Nations Office in Mali

26. The United Nations Office in Mali (UNOM) began its deployment on 21 January. As of 22 March, there were 47 United Nations staff members on the ground, of whom 23 are part of mission support. While planning its activities, UNOM has consulted with the Malian authorities to understand their needs and thus better align its efforts in support of a nationally owned process to address the current crisis.

## B. Support to the political process

27. The United Nations has continued to work closely with national stakeholders as well as with the African Union (AU), ECOWAS and other key international stakeholders to support the implementation of the transitional road map and the various pillars of the African Union strategic concept for Mali, as endorsed by the Support and Follow-up Group on the situation in Mali.

28. With respect to the negotiations with the groups in the north, my Special Representative for West Africa, Said Djinnit, has continued to support the efforts of

ECOWAS mediation, in line with resolution 2085 (2012), with a view to preparing for the round of negotiations that was initially scheduled for January. He has consulted different stakeholders in the subregion on options for a mediation that can engage non-terrorist groups and other representatives of the northern populations in a dialogue aimed at achieving a lasting solution to the crisis in Mali. To support the swift implementation of the different aspects of resolution 2085 (2012), he visited Ouagadougou and Abuja, on 13 and 14 January, respectively, to engage with the ECOWAS Mediator and the President of the ECOWAS Commission.

29. A coordination mechanism comprising the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS and the European Union has been put in place recently in Bamako, with the African Union and the United Nations as co-chairs. The group is working to ensure a coordinated approach and to harmonize the efforts of the international community. UNOM has also facilitated the establishment of a core group of women leaders to contribute to the Malian peace process.

30. In order to effectively cope with the regional implications of the situation in Mali, my Special Envoy for the Sahel, Romano Prodi, has been focusing on the broader Sahel dimension of the crisis and has continued to engage international partners on the design and implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy on the Sahel.

31. Having conducted an electoral needs assessment mission in November 2012, the United Nations continues to support the Malian authorities in their preparations for the elections. A UNDP elections project team has been working with the Malian authorities to implement the recommendations of a recent audit of the existing voter databases and to plan the establishment of a biometric voters' register extracted from an administrative census (recensement administratif à vocation d'état civil (RAVEC)). In this connection, work outstanding includes: (a) the review of biometric information and the integration of the Malian community in Côte d'Ivoire; (b) the production and distribution of identity cards; (c) the establishment of voters' lists; and (d) the configuration and establishment of polling stations.

32. In consultation with the Malian authorities, political parties and civil society, UNOM has identified the following priorities:

*The security situation*

33. The need to restore the integrity of Mali's territory and ensure the physical security of communities in the north has been identified as a central priority. Serious security challenges remain, including continued terrorist activities and military operations in some areas. Even when full territorial integrity is regained, many serious security risks will remain, including terrorist attacks, weapons proliferation, drug smuggling and other related criminal activities, which are likely to continue to undermine governance and development in Mali for the foreseeable future.

*The primacy of politics*

34. The coup d'état of 22 March 2012 and the crisis in northern Mali are, in large measure but not exclusively, manifestations of a crisis of governance that encompasses endemic corruption, weak State capacity to deliver basic services and the low level of legitimacy of State institutions and the political system. Strengthening State capacity and building the legitimacy of the State and the

political system at the national, regional and community levels are long-term, protracted endeavours. But if they are not carried out successfully, there is a high risk of further political and security crises in the future.

35. The security imperative should not detract from the primacy of politics in Mali in both the short and long term. The primacy of politics relates, in this context, to national dialogue and reconciliation; strengthening the capacity of State institutions; and building the legitimacy of these institutions and the political system.

*The need for national dialogue and reconciliation*

36. There is a high level of political and social polarization and antagonism between political actors as well as between and within communities. The cleavages are not only north-south but also within the north and within the south. Furthermore, there is a high level of trauma resulting from the rebellion, the occupation of the north and the human rights abuses and atrocities that were committed, including conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.

37. Not only is national dialogue needed, but multiple dialogues between and within communities and between various actors, including the Malian armed forces, are required. Dialogue and reconciliation efforts must also be linked to justice measures to ensure that there is no impunity for the violations that have occurred.

38. Some organizations in Mali support dialogue and negotiations but are opposed to these processes being inclusive of all relevant groups. There appears to be resistance, for example, to bilateral negotiations between the transitional Government and the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad. There seems to be widespread support, however, for a broad-based dialogue process that would bring together a wide range of actors, including community representatives, traditional leaders, civil society groups, elected officials, local authorities and representatives of the national Government, as well as those armed groups that renounce violence and accept Mali's territorial integrity and unity.

*Electoral reform and elections*

39. Although elections are essential to restore constitutional order and to establish the legitimacy and authority of the Government, there are some concerns that conditions are not yet ripe for the holding of free, credible and peaceful elections across the country. In the absence of reconciliation, there is little space for constructive political debate and elections could provoke further instability or even violence. Elections are not intended merely to provide an opportunity to cast a vote. More fundamentally, elections are an opportunity to debate and select political ideas, programmes and leaders. It will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to have a free and peaceful political competition in the north, particularly in refugee camps and among internally displaced persons.

40. There has been a consistently low turnout for elections in Mali, reflecting, among other things, a lack of popular confidence in the electoral process. In the absence of major political reforms that would enhance confidence in the electoral process, this problem is likely to be even greater during the next election. A flawed political system was one of the major causes of both the armed rebellion in the north and the mutiny that led to the coup d'état in March 2012. There is a danger that

ill-prepared elections will perpetuate that system. This perspective is held most strongly by those who supported or were at least sympathetic to the coup d'état.

41. In the light of these concerns, it is essential to proactively seek to create conditions conducive to the holding of free, fair, transparent and credible polls in keeping with international standards. Ensuring the participation of women in the electoral process, and that they can do so safely, will also be important. Consultations among key national stakeholders will be essential to create such conditions.

*The Malian defence and security forces and the security sector*

42. Reform of the defence and security institutions, especially the army, is a vital but complex task. Key goals include the restoration of institutional cohesion, discipline and integrity of command; provision of adequate equipment; training to ensure operational effectiveness and respect for international human rights and humanitarian and refugee law; establishment of accountability measures for violations of these laws; and, ensuring an institutional culture of respect for civilian authority, particularly through effective civilian oversight.

*The role of external actors*

43. The polarization and trauma that characterize Mali today require external actors to be sensitive, patient and supportive. International partners must recognize that there are no quick fixes and that external interventions can exacerbate divisions. It is essential to promote and support national ownership and to abide by the imperative of "do no harm". The organized political and social groupings of Mali require support of various kinds from the United Nations and other external actors but they also insist on national ownership.

## C. Support to the security process

44. In early January, the troop-contributing countries moved quickly to expedite the deployment of AFISMA in the light of Operation Serval. There were many planning and coordination challenges, including the delayed arrival of vehicles and other equipment. International partners provided support through strategic airlift and ground transportation in Mali. AFISMA troops are now expanding their presence in north and central Mali, including in the Kidal region.

45. On 25 January, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union requested the Commissions of AU and ECOWAS, in collaboration with the United Nations, the European Union and other partners, to revise the Joint Strategic Concept of Operations in order to increase AFISMA troop strength, including through the integration of the troops provided by Chad and other contingents. The Force Commander of AFISMA, General Shehu Abdulkadir, deployed to Mali in mid-January. As of 22 March, 6,288 military personnel had been deployed, including 84 officers at the headquarters of AFISMA.

46. While AFISMA contingents were required to be self-sufficient for 90 days following deployment, several have quickly faced serious logistical challenges, including as concerns food, fuel and water. Support provided by bilateral partners has helped address the most urgent needs. However, the provision of adequate

logistical support remains critical in order to ensure the timely completion of deployment and to allow for sustainable and effective operations.

47. United Nations military planners have provided planning support to AFISMA, helped to establish coordination mechanisms, assisted AFISMA and the Malian armed forces in identifying priority needs and contributed to increased AFISMA headquarters situational awareness. Furthermore, United Nations planners have supported the development of key documents for AFISMA, including operational directives, guidelines for the protection of civilians, rules of engagement and a code of conduct.

48. The African Union and ECOWAS convened a planning conference in Bamako from 15 to 20 February to revise the Joint Strategic Concept for AFISMA and also to develop a Concept of Operations for the civilian component of AFISMA. The revised Joint Strategic Concept was endorsed at the ECOWAS Summit in Yamoussoukro on 27 and 28 February.

49. Although some Malian troops have deployed to northern Mali, they face serious capacity constraints, in terms of equipment, training and logistical support. Assistance from Operation Serval has been vital in ensuring the provision of basic sustenance supplies for operational needs. The Malian Ministry of Defence is currently recruiting 3,000 additional troops. Meanwhile, the European Union training mission in Mali is establishing a facility in Koulikoro (60 km east of Bamako) for the training of Malian armed forces personnel. The mission is assessing capacities in order to develop appropriate programmes for the training of Malian units, which are expected to start in April, with a focus on four battalions.

50. The Malian Gendarmerie, National Police and National Guard, as well as justice and corrections institutions, have also faced challenges in redeploying and resuming activities in northern Mali. As of 22 February, there was no National Police presence in any of the major towns in northern Mali, while a limited number of gendarmes who had deployed in Gao and Timbuktu faced serious operational constraints. Justice and corrections institutions were not functioning. Plans to redeploy personnel to the north are hampered by security concerns, as well as major logistical challenges, including lack of premises, transportation and basic equipment. There is an urgent need to mobilize donor support to help address the priority needs of the Malian security and rule of law institutions, including reconstruction of offices, vehicles, communications equipment and basic supplies.

51. Since the deployment of UNOM in January 2013, the United Nations Mine Action Service has launched activities in support of AFISMA and the Malian defence and security forces as well as in humanitarian mine action. A five-week course in the field of explosive ordnance disposal was organized in support of the Malian defence and security forces. Awareness sessions on explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices were organized for AFISMA and UNOM personnel. With regard to humanitarian demining, five teams from international non-governmental organizations have been coordinated and deployed in conflict-affected areas in order to conduct surveys and explosive ordnance disposal.

# VII. Options for the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation

52. Further to the letter from the Secretary-General transmitting the letter of the interim President (S/2013/113), in which the transformation of AFISMA into a United Nations stabilization and peacekeeping operation was envisaged, and the corresponding letter from the President of the Security Council (S/2013/129), my Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Edmond Mulet, visited Mali from 10 to 16 March, together with a multidisciplinary delegation, to develop recommendations for the Council's consideration on options for establishing a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Mali.

53. The delegation met with the interim President, the Prime Minister and members of the Government, the President of the National Electoral Commission (CENI), the President of the National Assembly, local authorities, the leadership of the armed forces, police and gendarmerie, and representatives of political parties, religious organizations and civil society, as well as regional and international stakeholders, including the African Union, ECOWAS, AFISMA, the European Union and bilateral partners. Members of the delegation also visited Gao, Mopti, Sevare and Timbuktu.

## A. Key findings

*Political situation*

54. Representatives of the transitional authorities in Bamako confirmed their commitment to dealing with the security issue in the north, while expressing the view that the root causes of the conflict, namely, poor governance, corruption and an ineffective rule of law and security sector, would have to be addressed by an elected Government. Some interlocutors expressed concern that continued interference by elements involved in the coup d'état of 21 March 2012 weakens institutions. They confirmed that significant divisions among political actors and within the military persist, while social polarization runs deep among and within communities.

55. All interlocutors agreed on the need for a legitimate elected Government to take forward national dialogue and key reforms. Reiterating its commitment to conclude elections before the end of July, the Government noted that a review was under way to assess the status of preparations. It was found that while these elections are crucial to end the transition and install a legitimate Government, minimum political and security conditions would need to be in place to ensure that the elections unify, rather than further divide, the country, in order to avoid further deepening the crisis.

56. All interlocutors agreed that there is an urgent need to rebuild State administration in areas recovered, in the north in order to sustain Mali's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This requires strong institutions at the national level, while ensuring effective administration at the local level, as well as sufficient resources to sustain the reach of the State across Mali's vast expanses and in remote geographical areas. Representatives of the civilian administration have yet to return to the north, although the interim President confirmed the intention of the Government to deploy them as soon as possible. The presence of civil servants will

be essential to ensure the delivery of basic services and is a prerequisite for the deployment of any potential stabilization operation. Meanwhile, much of the infrastructure of the State administration in the north has been abandoned, looted or destroyed.

57. Malian defence and security institutions have recently begun to redeploy to some areas in the north. The reception among the local population has been varied. These forces are not yet in a position to ensure the safety and security of the population. The Malian defence and security institutions are fractured, insufficiently equipped and lack training, all of which combines with a history of political interference. All the security agencies were significantly depleted and therefore face serious operational constraints. A potential stabilization operation would play a critical role in supporting the Malian security forces in stabilizing the recovered areas in the north.

58. The differing situations found in the main cities and regions in the north will require tailored solutions. The situation in Kidal remains extremely sensitive, given the continued presence of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, and the lack of progress in achieving a negotiated solution to the crisis, which would also facilitate the return of State authority. Although the Government reiterated that it was willing to engage in discussions with the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad under certain conditions, including disarmament, many interlocutors expressed opposition to any form of dialogue. Extending State authority to Kidal will require a political solution.

59. Although the Government has endorsed the transition road map, there is no comprehensive political framework agreement, which would also set the stage for the eventual disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of some former combatants, including those belonging to militia. Traditional approaches will, therefore, need to be adjusted.

*Security situation*

60. Operation Serval in northern Mali has made significant progress on the security front but Islamist armed groups, including Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and Ansar Dine, still pose a serious threat. While ongoing operations are degrading larger organized concentrations of these groups, particularly in the Kidal region, they also retain a strong presence in Timesli (Gao) and Gourma (Ansongo) and along the Niger River to Timbuktu and Timetrine. Pockets of extremist groups also exist from the Ouagadou Forest to Timbuktu, as well as north of Menaka and south and east of Douentza. An unknown number of fighters have sought refuge outside Mali or have melted back into the population, retaining weapons caches and the capacity to re-emerge. The groups are well equipped and trained. They have fought aggressively and employ guerrilla and terrorist tactics, including rockets, improvised explosive devices and suicide bombs.

61. Armed militias operate throughout the north. Although they lack a clear chain of command, they have been identified as a threat. Political tensions and divisions in the military, which have also led to violence, remain a potential security threat in Bamako. Organized transnational criminal networks operate throughout Mali and across the Sahel and are involved in drug cartel operations, cross-border banditry, smuggling, human trafficking, kidnapping-for-ransoms and money-laundering.

These transnational criminal activities generate high profits that are used to support extremist violence and insurgent activities in Mali.

62. Operation Serval, AFISMA and the Malian security forces remain engaged in significant combat operations against terrorist groups in key areas in the north and the centre. A significant diminution or cessation of French operations would likely heighten the risk of resurgence by these groups. If this were to occur, there would be a continued need for limited targeted offensive operations. AFISMA, currently at approximately 82 per cent of its expected strength of 9,500, has deployed units to Ansongo, Bamako, Banamba, Gao, Kidal, Markala, San and Sevare as well as the region around Tessalit. AFISMA and Malian forces, supported by Operation Serval, have also conducted operations in the Ouagadou Forest region.

63. Terrorist groups and tactics, the proliferation of weapons, improvised explosive devices, unexploded ordnances and landmines are expected to pose significant threats to the safety and security of civilians and any United Nations personnel deployed in Mali. The suicide bombing incident of 21 March in Timbuktu illustrated the significant threats that United Nations personnel will be directly exposed to, and the potential for such incidents to result in high numbers of casualties.

## B. Options for a United Nations operation

64. The challenges that confront Mali run deep and are not susceptible to any easy solution. Mali and its international partners have a shared interest in defining the elements of an appropriate entry and exit strategy for a United Nations operation. Mali has an important window of opportunity to address the immediate challenges facing the country while laying the groundwork for sustainable peace and security. This requires going beyond addressing security threats alone, and tackling deep-rooted political, governance, development and security challenges. The objective of any United Nations operation would be to help the Malian State regain its legitimacy and re-establish its authority across the entire territory in order to provide physical security to all its people and ensure that its territory does not provide a platform for the emergence of threats to itself, its neighbours and beyond.

65. Operation Serval has achieved impressive gains, including the liberation of the major population centres in the north and the reduction of the threat posed by Islamic armed groups. With these troops soon to begin their drawdown, Mali and its international partners must determine how best to ensure that the security gains achieved are durable. The main tasks will be to contain the threat posed by armed extremists groups; stabilize population centres in the recovered areas; protect civilians; and create an environment conducive to humanitarian assistance, including the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

66. It will be equally important to support Malian efforts to establish a political order that enjoys the consent of the governed on the basis of inclusive dialogue, political participation, accountable governance and safeguards for all communities. A critical factor, in this regard, is the restoration of constitutional order through free, fair, credible and peaceful presidential, legislative and municipal elections. Political dialogue at the local and national levels will need to result in a greater consensus around the reforms needed to address the root causes of the conflict.

67. Mali requires an effective and accountable presence of the State with the capacity to deliver the most critical public services, including security and law and order, across the entire territory. This will require strong institutions with sufficient resources to extend their reach deep into the country.

68. Alongside the continuation of the current responsibilities of the United Nations, the key question before the Security Council is the extent to which the Organization can or should assume responsibility for security and stabilization, in the light of the gains achieved by Operation Serval. Ultimately, security and stabilization efforts will need to be underpinned by a viable political process and serve as an incentive for the parties on the ground to engage in that process.

69. Many Malian interlocutors, as well as AU and ECOWAS, requested a United Nations force to undertake combat operations against terrorist groups with the aim of restoring Mali's territorial integrity. In such a scenario, Operation Serval would hand over its tasks to a United Nations mission, including through the re-hatting of AFISMA, with an enforcement mandate to combat the remnants of active insurgent groups and conduct counter-terrorism operations. Combating extremist groups in the deserts and mountains of northern Mali requires very particular and demanding military capabilities that are difficult to obtain but will nonetheless be vital for any force engaged in such operations.

70. The United Nations is not configured to oversee such operations at a strategic level, nor are its peacekeepers typically trained, equipped or experienced in the kind of operations that would be required to implement such a mandate. Moreover, an effort of this nature falls well outside the scope of the United Nations peacekeeping doctrine. It is also doubtful that the Organization would have the ability to absorb the numbers of casualties that could be incurred through such combat operations. Consequently, the following two options are presented for the Council's consideration:

**Option 1. Multidimensional integrated political United Nations presence alongside an African-led military force**

71. The United Nations would continue its political and development activities under a strengthened political mission. Building on the work of UNOM, the strategic areas in which the United Nations multidisciplinary presence could focus its efforts would include: (a) support for mediation, negotiations, national dialogue and community dialogues, including a good offices role; (b) assistance to the transitional authorities with the electoral process, in coordination with UNDP; (c) promotion of respect for human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law, including with respect to women and children; (d) support for the planning and preparations for the deployment and operations of AFISMA; (e) mainstreaming of gender concerns and prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in the policies and functions of the Office, while supporting and promoting the engagement of Malian women and youth in the political process; (f) support to the authorities in strengthening State institutions in the areas of rule of law and security; and (g) promotion of coordination on the political process within the United Nations system and with other external actors. In the meantime, AFISMA would be responsible for security, together with bilateral military efforts, in support of the Malian defence and security forces. AFISMA would have an offensive combat and stabilization mandate focusing on extremist armed groups.

72. The United Nations would work with AU, ECOWAS, troop-contributing countries and bilateral partners to rapidly build and enhance the operational capability of AFISMA, using the Trust Fund in support of AFISMA established pursuant to resolution 2085 (2012), and possibly through a logistics support package funded through assessed contributions. In addition to providing AFISMA with urgently needed operational capability, such support could also facilitate a smooth transition to a United Nations multidimensional stabilization mission, once critical benchmarks have been met. Such benchmarks could include: a cessation of major combat operations; reduction in the level of residual threats; ability to safely deploy United Nations civilian staff; the capacity of AFISMA; the extension of State authority throughout the country; and progress towards the conclusion of presidential and legislative elections.

73. In parallel, the European Union is expected to continue its training of the Malian armed forces, which would also be supported in non-lethal areas by the Trust Fund. This option would also provide the flexibility for the re-hatting of AFISMA to a United Nations peacekeeping operation, when the Council decides that the conditions are right.

**Option 2. Multidimensional integrated United Nations stabilization mission under Chapter VII alongside a parallel force**

74. Subject to an assessment of political and security conditions on the ground, the United Nations would deploy a multidimensional integrated presence under Chapter VII of the Charter. UNOM would be subsumed into that presence. The United Nations force would support the political process and carry out security-related stabilization tasks, with a focus on major population centres and lines of communication, protecting civilians, human rights monitoring, the creation of conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance and the return of displaced persons, the extension of State authority and the preparation of free, inclusive and peaceful elections. The force would likely face asymmetric attacks against itself and Government institutions, demonstrations of force and the use of rockets, improvised explosive devices and suicide bombs.

75. The force would operate under robust rules of engagement with a mandate to use all necessary means to address threats to the implementation of its mandate, which would include protection of civilians under imminent threat of physical violence and protection of United Nations personnel from residual threats, within its capabilities and its areas of deployment. This could include the conduct of operations on its own or in cooperation with the Malian defence and security forces. Operations would be conducted in a manner consistent with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, would take fully into account the need to protect civilians and mitigate risk before, during and after any military operation and, where undertaken jointly with the Malian defence and security forces, in strict compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces (A/67/775-S/2013/110). Careful consideration must also be given to the risks associated with the adoption of a robust posture in terms of the security of United Nations staff, the conduct of humanitarian operations and the ability of the Organization to deliver on its overall mandate.

76. The bulk of AFISMA would transition to a United Nations stabilization mission, along with other contributors, to reach an authorized strength of 11,200

troops and 1,440 police (comprising 8 formed police units and 320 individual police officers). The proposed authorized military strength of 11,200, based on seven mobile infantry battalions and a reserve battalion, as well as enablers, taking into account the geographic and threat environments, provides for a security presence in the major population areas assessed to be at highest risk, and in the priority areas for stabilization and extension of State authority. A critical challenge would be the sourcing of the key capabilities, enablers and modern technologies required to operate in harsh desert and mountain conditions, which may require seeking support from new contributors. The majority of the military, police and civilian substantive and support components would operate primarily in the north with a possible logistics base in Gao or Sevare, while a light presence, including civilians, military and police elements, led by my Special Representative for West Africa, would be based in Bamako.

77. The assumption of security responsibilities by the mission would only take place once the necessary security and political conditions were deemed to be in place, following an assessment by the Secretariat. The implications of these responsibilities in terms of how the mission's protection of civilians mandate is implemented would also need to be assessed. The deployment would need to be conditions-based. It would be phased over time and by geographic area in response to the evolving situation on the ground, including the need for continued combat operations, progress in the political process and the related redeployment of Malian State administration to the north, the ability to safely deploy United Nations civilian personnel to the north, and the establishment of the requisite level of operational capability of the United Nations force.

78. Given the anticipated level and nature of the residual threat, there would be a fundamental requirement for a parallel force to operate in Mali (and potentially in the subregion) alongside the United Nations mission, in order to conduct major combat and counter-terrorism operations and provide specialist support beyond the scope of the United Nations mandate and capability. An in-theatre capability of this nature would be required for a period of time, and may also require the provision of a logistical support package, before reliance on an over-the-horizon force could be considered. Close coordination and cooperation between such a parallel force, the United Nations mission and other security actors would be crucial to ensure overall coherence of effort.

79. The mission support planning for a possible United Nations stabilization mission is at an advanced stage. It is informed by the ongoing AFISMA operational plans and requirements, and is being coordinated with United Nations military, police and substantive components. The support concept for the mission includes the extensive use of contractors, troop contributors and Members States for service delivery; a light support structure focused on contract management and quality assurance; co-location of civilian, military and police elements in modularized camps (including a possible base in Gao), which are resilient and well stocked so as to sustain any interruptions in supply lines; as well as proper environmental management to minimize its environmental impact.

80. Given the critical role of AFISMA and the Malian defence and security forces, rapidly building their capacities will be essential even prior to further action by the Council. The United Nations will need to operate in close coordination with partners such as AU, ECOWAS and the European Union to provide this support. It will be

essential to use the two trust funds established further to resolution 2085 (2012) to support AFISMA and peace and security in Mali. Contribution agreements have been concluded in the amount of $26.7 million for support to AFISMA and $6.9 million for support to peace and security in Mali. As of 22 March, funds in the amount of $16.2 million and $5.6 million had been received for the two funds, respectively.

81. If the Security Council were to authorize a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Mali and/or a support package using assessed contributions for AFISMA, I would instruct my Special Representative, and relevant departments in the Secretariat, to take all possible measures, including through the full use of existing authorities, and at my discretion, to accelerate the deployment of civilian and military capabilities in order to best respond to the expectations of the Council and the needs of the Malian people.

82. Under either of the options outlined above, the United Nations would focus on supporting the Malian authorities in critical areas where it has a comparative advantage. Accompanying the political process, including through a strong good offices mandate in coordination with regional initiatives, would be the core task of any United Nations mission. Critical benchmarks would be built into the mandate at each stage of the mission so as to enable it to move as rapidly as possible from entry to stabilization, consolidation and sustainable exit.

83. In the initial stage, other tasks could focus on the areas of human rights, the extension of State authority, reduction of community violence and the promotion of social cohesion, strengthening of the rule of law and security institutions, the creation of a safe and secure environment conducive to humanitarian operations, and mine action. It will also be important for the mission to have a strong capacity for civil-military cooperation and quick-impact projects. An integrated mission would also have implications for the ability of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and its partners to carry out humanitarian work given its potential impact on the impartiality of humanitarian actors. System-wide assessments will be conducted to further refine and elaborate the overall United Nations response. Efforts will be necessary from the outset of the mission to manage expectations of the population through a strong communications strategy.

84. Close collaboration and cooperation with other partners, including AU, ECOWAS, the European Union, international financial institutions and bilateral partners, to assume additional tasks, would allow the United Nations to focus on its core responsibilities. Given the large number of actors involved, the United Nations mission should provide a strong coordination mechanism.

85. Strong subregional cooperation will be needed to address the corrosive issue of transnational crime and strengthen capacities to enhance border security. The United Nations mission could extend support to, and coordinate with, security cooperation mechanisms in the Sahel and West African regions. It could also help Malian institutions enhance their engagement in this regard, including through the strengthening of border management capacities. Working with the broader subregion to address common political, humanitarian and development issues will also be essential.

86. In the light of the subregional implications and threats, it is further recommended that the Council consider establishing a group of experts to investigate the identity and activities of those involved in transnational and

organized crime in Mali and the subregion, with the possibility of imposing punitive, targeted sanctions.

## VIII. Observations

87. The crisis in Mali is complex and multilayered. Its impact on the everyday lives of people has been devastating. The humanitarian crisis continues to take a heavy toll on people across the country. Many of Mali's citizens are still displaced in difficult living conditions, and reports of human rights violations are deeply disturbing. The current crisis has revealed a complex web of political, governance and security challenges. Exacerbated by the scourge of transnational crime and terrorism, which has beset the entire Sahel region, these challenges have provided fertile ground for the rise of extremists and organized criminal networks.

88. Following the decision by the terrorists and extremist armed groups to move southwards, the international community is now confronted with a fundamentally different situation from the one that existed when resolution 2085 (2012) was adopted. While there have been important gains on the security front, the political process lags dangerously behind the military effort. I therefore urge the transitional authorities to implement their road map in an inclusive manner.

89. The national dialogue, which is meant to serve as the forum for discussing and agreeing on the implementation of these priorities, should be convened without delay. In this regard, the United Nations will continue to assist governmental and non-governmental facilitators and mediators in strengthening their capacity, support constructive and inclusive dialogue between Government and political parties, encourage dialogue between the Government and Malian groups in the north, and assist the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa (UNOWA) in supporting the mediation led by ECOWAS.

90. The Government has expressed full agreement on the need for the military and political processes to evolve concurrently. The authorities have also noted that Mali needs a broader reconciliation process, which can only be carried out once basic State authority and control have been re-established in the north. Similarly, they are of the view that elections, as an essential element of the political process, should take place once critical northern positions have been brought back under Government control.

91. The establishment of UNOM has brought additional capacities to United Nations efforts in Mali, especially in terms of support to the political and security processes, rule of law, mine action and human rights. This has allowed the Organization to concentrate on supporting and assisting the Malians in their efforts to address the root causes of political tension and instability in the country. The United Nations will continue to build on this work, focusing on the key areas of engagement highlighted in paragraph 71 above.

92. The transition road map provides for elections to be held between April and July 2013. A political atmosphere conducive to credible and peaceful elections needs to be created as a matter of urgency. Equally, the financial gap needs to be bridged between the $50 million allocated by the Government and the $126 million required by the electoral budget. The United Nations will continue to support the Government in preparing the elections and assist the transitional authorities in

creating conditions conducive to credible elections, including by encouraging and, if requested, facilitating a national dialogue and consultations around the conditions for credible elections.

93. The Malian army still has very little capacity and its transformation will be a major, long-term challenge. It will be important to place the reform of security and rule of law institutions within the broader framework of national dialogue and reconciliation. This will require continued support to the authorities to reform the security sector (military, police and gendarmerie), including by strengthening mechanisms for civilian control and oversight and supporting the Government in developing its capacity to restore the rule of law and strengthen the legal, judicial and corrections systems, including military justice. Training and other support through the United Nations Mine Action Service to the Malian authorities on mine clearance, explosive ordnance disposal, activities to detect and eliminate improvised explosive devices, and related issues will also be required. Malian institutions will also need help in implementing measures related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, in order to manage the issues that arise when disengaging combatants.

94. The worrying human rights situation requires immediate attention by the national authorities and international partners alike. The United Nations will continue to promote the rule of law and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, including with respect to women and children. To this end, the United Nations will engage with the Malian authorities to ascertain training needs in human rights and international humanitarian law. It will monitor and conduct investigations of violations, devise advocacy strategies, support the Malian authorities in developing appropriate transitional justice policies, and ensure the observance of the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces.

95. The United Nations will also seek to promote the underlying principles of freedom of the press and access to reliable information. It will continue, both locally and internationally, its communications efforts aimed at ensuring a clear public understanding of the Organization's objectives and role in support of the transition and stabilization processes in Mali.

96. The humanitarian crisis in Mali and the broader Sahel region requires greater international attention. As the risk of the spread of asymmetrical warfare increases, it is critical that humanitarian and political agendas be kept separate. A failure to do so could undermine the neutrality of humanitarian organizations operating in the north, jeopardizing their ability to access all those in need, as well as the security of their personnel.

97. There are pressing needs for immediate relief and reconstruction, and for longer-term development and employment opportunities. The Mali Consolidated Appeal Process for 2013, which includes resilience building as a key objective, has requirements of $373 million, of which $151 million are urgently needed for Mali and the refugee response in neighbouring countries over the next three months. There is also a need to plan early recovery interventions in conjunction with humanitarian interventions in the north, such as redeployment of public services, infrastructure rehabilitation, livelihood restoration and promotion of rule of law and social cohesion.

98. In response to the request made by the Security Council, I have presented two options for a possible United Nations peace and security presence in Mali, including an option for the deployment of a United Nations stabilization mission, once the necessary conditions are in place. While each of these options bears distinct characteristics, they can be viewed as phases in the gradual process of transition from the current situation to a United Nations stabilization mission deployed alongside a parallel force. As part of this process, the Organization will continue to assess the situation against critical political and security benchmarks, such as those identified in paragraph 72, in order to determine the timing of the transition to a United Nations stabilization mission.

99. The options presented in the present report are based on a frank appraisal of the current political and security environment, as well as a thorough analysis of the comparative advantage of the United Nations vis à vis other international actors in the ongoing effort to bring peace and stability to Mali. They take into account the fact that the United Nations is operating in a new geopolitical context and faces threats that have not been encountered before in a peacekeeping context. The situation on the ground remains fluid. Although the extremists and criminal elements have been dealt a heavy blow, they continue to pose a significant threat to the safety and security of the civilian population and any United Nations personnel deployed in Mali. The recent suicide bombing in Timbuktu and the fighting in Gao are a stark reminder that the risk of a major deterioration of the security situation remains ever present.

100. At the same time, it is critical that a clear distinction be maintained between the core peacekeeping tasks of an envisaged United Nations stabilization mission and the peace enforcement and counter-terrorism activities of the parallel force that will necessarily need to be established to preserve the hard-won security gains achieved so far. Any blurring of this distinction would place severe constraints on the ability of United Nations humanitarian, development and human rights personnel to safely do their work. If this were to happen, the United Nations would find it difficult to mount the kind of comprehensive system-wide response required to address the political, social and economic root causes of the multifaceted crisis in Mali.

101. In the same vein, given that the problems in Mali are part of a regional crisis, it will be essential to coordinate support to Mali within a broader regional strategy that incorporates Mali's neighbours and key partners in the process.